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ABSTRACT

Information and accompanying exercises in this four-part booklet are designed to assist adults make changes in their career and personal lives. After introductory material describing career and life planning as a continual assessment process, Part I of the booklet reviews the common characteristics and problems of adults in each of five life stages: age 20 to 30; age 30 to 40; age 40 to 50; age 50 to 60; and age 60 or older. In Part I three questions are posed to help the reader assess the problems s/he currently faces and to examine the crises s/he has faced in the past ten years. Part II discusses and poses questions about eight factors to be considered in making a mid-life change: career, family, personal values, physical factors, psychological factors, leisure time, physical environment, and the influence of others over one's life. A list of 11 irrational beliefs that may impede change is also provided in Part II, as well as exercises which help the reader to identify the positive and negative factors of his/her current lifestyle. Next, Part III requires the reader to list options for change under each of the above eight factors, and Part IV provides a framework for a plan of action that requires the reader to set priorities for desired changes, determine a time frame for accomplishing these changes, and identify the assistance that will be needed for success. The booklet concludes with a 21-item bibliography of works dealing with change in adult life. (JP)

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MID-LIFE AND CAREER TRANSITIONS

Booklet Six

The Career Life Assessment Skills Series

A Program to Meet Adult Developmental Needs

Bernadette M. Curtin
Fred J. Hecklinger

Project Directors

Vocational Guidance and Counseling Project

Conducted Under

Vocational Education Amendments of 1976

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1981

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The Career Life Assessment Skills Series
(CLASS)

This series consists of eight booklets which can be used in conjunction with the CLASS workshops or by themselves. The following topics are covered in the series.

BOOKLET ONE — YOUR UNIQUE SELF

This booklet helps you to look at your interests, skills, values, work values, and lifestyle preferences.

BOOKLET TWO — JOB MARKET INVESTIGATION

This booklet helps you to research careers, to identify possible new careers that may interest you, and to make effective decisions.

BOOKLET THREE — JOB CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES

This booklet helps you learn how to find a job, to know how to handle an interview, to write a resume, and to conduct an effective job search.

BOOKLET FOUR — THE FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT PROCESS

This booklet helps you to understand the federal employment process and outlines the best ways to look for a job with the federal government.

BOOKLET FIVE — ACADEMIC SURVIVAL SKILLS

This booklet helps you to deal with some of the learning skills needed to be successful when returning to school.

BOOKLET SIX — MID-LIFE AND CAREER TRANSITIONS

This booklet helps you to understand what kind of career and life changes people go through and to evaluate your own needs for change.

BOOKLET SEVEN — JOB-KEEPING AND REVITALIZATION

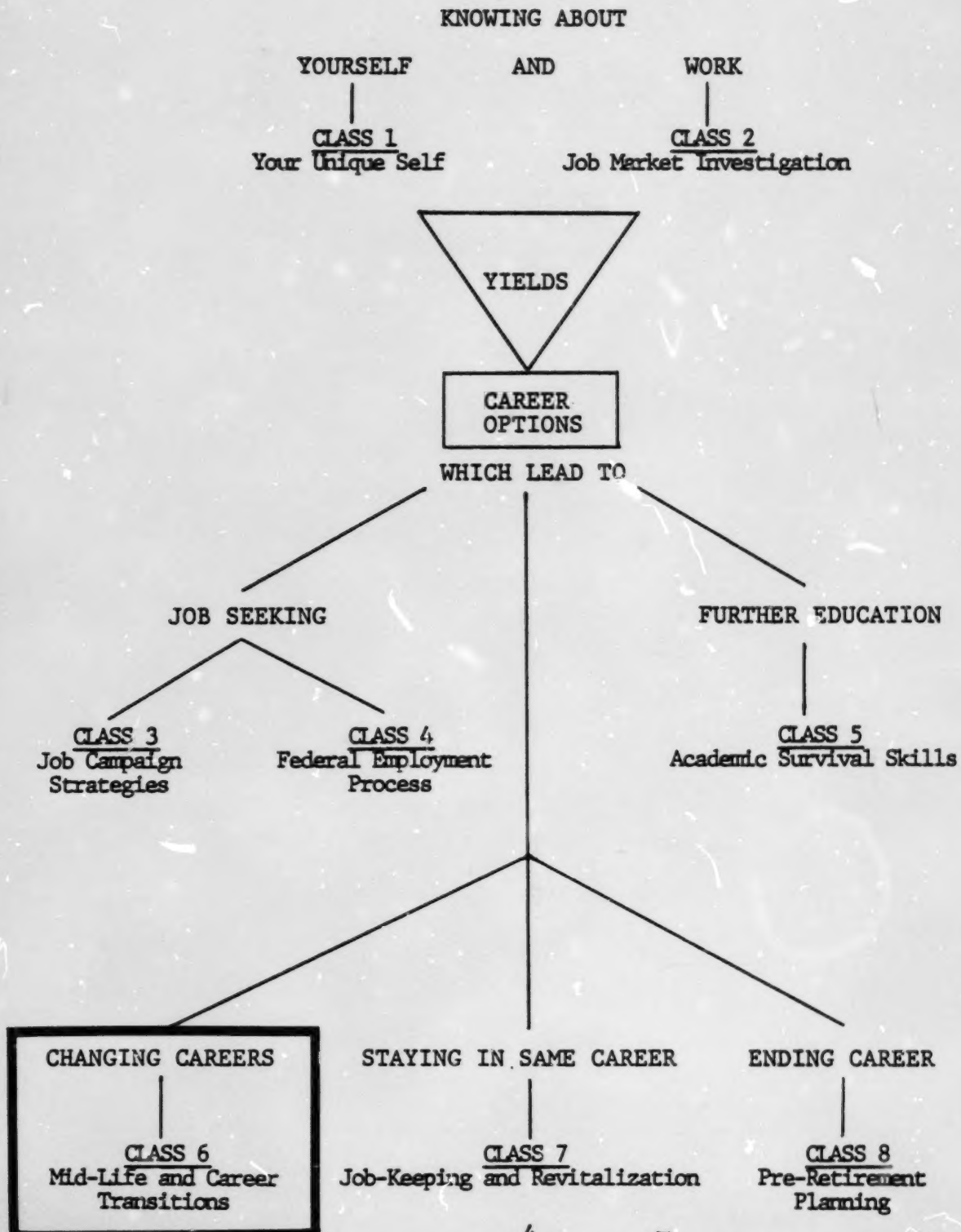
This booklet helps you to maintain your effectiveness and interest in your current job and suggests ways that you can breathe new life into your job.

BOOKLET EIGHT — PRE-RETIREMENT PLANNING

This booklet helps you to look at the important issues involved in planning for your retirement and gives you guidelines on how to get started with this process.

CAREER LIFE ASSESSMENT SKILLS SERIES

C.L.A.S.S.



CAREER LIFE PLANNING

Career life planning is a continual process of assessing where you are headed in your life and career and of deciding whether or not you wish to make changes. In order to make these life and career decisions, it is important that you know about three distinct but essential areas:

- Yourself, which involves taking an inventory of your
  - --interests
  - --skills and abilities
  - --work values
  - --personal values
  - --temperament
  - --personality traits
  - --lifestyle preference
- The world of work, which involves the evaluation of your own career, if you have one, and other potential careers through
  - --research
  - --experience
  - --informational interviewing
  - --decision-making
  - --job revitalization
- Other opportunities not necessarily connected with work that may help you to change your lifestyle, such as
  - --education
  - --leisure activities
  - --community service
  - --retirement planning

After an in-depth look at your own goals and lifestyle preferences and a comprehensive evaluation of the career change and other options open to you, you will then be ready to make an effective decision.

Making a life or career decision is a big step. At this juncture, you will want to set up a plan to carry out your decision. This might include some of the following short-term goals:

- Obtain more specific training or "brush-up" work on a skill.
- Make some changes in your present job that will increase your job satisfaction.
- Up-date your resume.
- Make changes in your lifestyle.
- Improve your interviewing style.
- Return to school.
- Investigate other job opportunities.
- Become involved in community activities that interest you.
- Plan a second career to enter in a few years.
- Plan for your retirement.

The short-term goals that you establish for yourself will eventually help you to make the changes that you feel are appropriate to fulfill your life and career plans. It is only through planning, evaluating, investigating, reviewing, and decision-making that you can begin to put the career planning process to work for you.

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CAREER AND LIFE CHANGES

Booklet Five

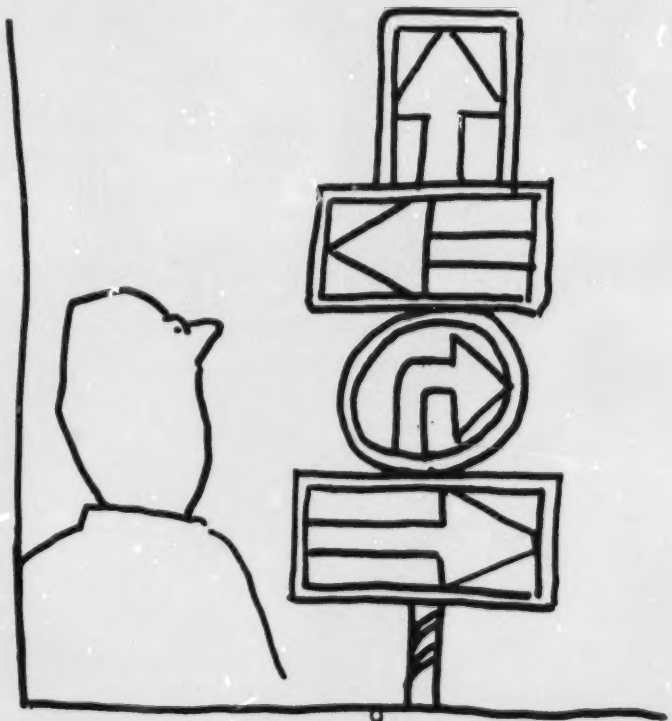
Career Life Assessment Skills Series

(CLASS)

Introduction

Are you tired of your career and are looking for a change? Do you have what you would call a career or is it just a job for you? Do you find yourself struggling to get up in the morning and go to work? Are you unhappy with your home, your family, the geographic area where you live? Do you seem to be plodding along aimlessly? Do you feel that you have lost control of the direction that your life is taking? If your answer to any of these questions is yes, then it may be helpful for you to assess where you are right now with your career and other aspects of your life. By looking at your life in an organized, analytical way, you may be able to see where you can make some changes. These changes may be large, involving changing careers, moving, or other actions that would radically alter your lifestyle; or they could be much more subtle, such as changing how you spend your leisure time or adjusting your attitude toward your work.

This booklet is designed to assist you in evaluating your career and life as it is now and in determining where and how changes can be made. It will help you to look at your own development and analyze many of the factors that must be considered when you make any significant changes in your life. In order to begin this process, it is important for you to understand some of the distinct stages that most adults go through as they progress through the years. These stages and changes in your own psychological needs may play a large part in affecting how you feel about your career, your family and friends, and yourself.



I. Adult Life Stages

What kinds of changes have you experienced in the past ten years? It's natural for adults to have changing needs and changing roles, although this has just recently become a matter for study by psychologists and others. In the past most of the emphasis in studying human developmental needs was placed on young children and teenagers. Adults were considered to be relatively stable unless some serious change, such as mental illness, arose. This attitude was consistent with the relatively stable lifestyle that was promoted and perceived as "healthy" for most adults--a stable job with the same organization over a number of years, a family, house, car, and all the trappings of a consistent, successful lifestyle. Many people, however, are reluctant to accept a societal definition of what a good adult lifestyle should be. People do change and often need something different, or something more. It is important for you to evaluate where you are in your development and to analyze some of the forces within you that may be calling for change. The following is a summary of the various life stages that most adults go through in one way or another. Please remember that the descriptions and time periods are general. Each individual does go through various life stages, but the time sequence and intensity of the changes may vary greatly from person to person.

A. Age 20 to 30

This period involves much testing of skills and establishment of the individual's independence and identity. Parents play a less important role in influencing an individual's decisions or lifestyle than they did before. Peer groups are more important as the individual searches for personal identity. There is a tendency to reach out toward others in an attempt to develop intimacy in relationships. In some cases this is fulfilled by marriage. In other cases, close friendships meet this need. This period is usually marked by the end of formal education and the beginning of full time work. The individual may hold a variety of jobs as working environments and job skills are tested. The need to start at the bottom of the ladder in many organizations and the often slow movement into areas of increased responsibility can be a source of frustration. Many individuals have a need to move quickly and may not be accepting of older people and "the establishment."

This period is marked by the dreams and possibilities that go with a feeling of an unlimited future. So many opportunities exist and there is often little concern with long-range planning or future restrictions. There is a desire to create an independent life structure and an identity separate from parents and previous family associations. Often during this period an individual benefits from having a "mentor"--someone considerably older who provides acceptance, support, and assistance in the individual's development.

Possessions of significance may be acquired during this period as the individual sets up housekeeping. There may well be limited financial resources, but there may be impatience to achieve tangible goals, such as a house, furnishings, and other examples of success and the good life. For this reason individuals may go into debt as they are unwilling to take the time to wait to acquire those things that they feel are important.

Family skills are tested during this time, often through a marriage relationship and the effort it takes to make such a relationship work. In many cases, individuals are unable to maintain a positive relationship, which can lead to frustration and self-doubt. A decision is often made as to whether or not to have children. Establishment of the role as a parent is a major task involving considerable adjustments, and along with this comes the management of home and family. A woman faced with having children may have her role defined for her for the next twenty years as homemaker and mother, and she may have difficulty accepting this role. She may desire to work, whether for financial reasons or for personal fulfillment, and this must be resolved within the marriage relationship. Throughout this period there is a continual re-evaluation and testing of family relationships and marriage.

In summary, this is a period of rapid growth and development in many ways, a period in which opportunities seem great, so great that there may be frustration with the rate in which some goals are achieved. This is a period of testing, learning, and developing skills and identity as an adult.

B. Age 30 to 40

This period may be marked at the beginning by an assessment around the age of 30. Life may now seem more difficult and painful. There may be a re-evaluation of life's purpose, and the individual may question early decisions that were made regarding self, career, and family. For many, however, progress in their careers has brought a greater degree of self-confidence. Recognition has been gained for accomplishments on the job and the individual has the satisfaction of making significant contributions in the work setting. There are more payoffs from work in terms of higher status, prestige, success and higher pay. No longer is the individual starting out and the lowest person on the ladder. There are others who are just beginning, and they may provide a challenge to the individual's status. Some who have not met with success and progress in their careers, or who do not enjoy the work they are doing, become uneasy and begin to look for something else. In most cases, workers in this period spend a great deal of time on the job.

During this stage, the last of a couple's children usually are born. Some children move into adolescence, presenting new challenges to the parents' family skills. Children become more independent and the parent must try to adjust to this change. Generally, an active social life declines during this period and there is less making of new friends. Marital satisfaction often declines and marriages are very vulnerable to infidelity and divorce. More marriages end in divorce in this period than during any other. Because of work and family responsibilities, there is less leisure time. While a husband may be achieving significant job success, a woman may be at home with family responsibilities, left with few growth opportunities. This can put a great strain on the relationship. Women who have not been working, or who have been working in a job that offers little challenge, may want to change, to find a job, or to change careers.

Physical changes begin to take on a greater significance during this period. It is easier to put on weight. Hair may begin to disappear

or turn grey. Physical strength and capabilities may not be quite the same as before. For the first time an individual is reminded that there is an aging process that must be dealt with. There is a tendency to compare progress in career, family, and status achievements with that of friends and relatives. There is a need to define success and to feel successful, and this is often done through the acquisition of material goods. The period may be more present-centered than goal-centered, with the need to make things happen now. In the late thirties, a sense of desperation may come to some individuals who feel they must make it big in a hurry if they are ever to do so.

This may be the most dynamic of all life periods. It begins with relative youth and ends with middle age. More issues are confronted during this period than during any other, and the decisions that are made tend to determine an individual's lifestyle for years to come.

C. Age 40 to 50

At the beginning of this period, many individuals face the challenge of mid-life. Suddenly aware that time may be running out, these people question values that they previously lived by and look at ways to change their lives. This can be a period of great instability and has been likened to a second adolescence. Time becomes more important as the individual realizes the temporary nature of existence; by this time the individual probably has lived more years than there are left to live. There is a concern about not making changes sooner or about having put off decisions in the past. Now there is a feeling that it may be too late. There is a re-evaluation of dreams and goals. What once seemed to be attainable may now not be realistic. This can be a source of great frustration and anxiety.

In a career, there may be less opportunities to move up the career ladder and there may be fewer possibilities to move from one job to another. For many, financial goals that were once considered achievable cannot be reached. For those who have achieved their financial goals, there may be concern over what other purpose there is to life. There is a need to adjust career and life goals to reflect the individual's actual status. This can be an opportunity to set new, more realistic and satisfying goals. A new role of nurturing and helping others, of being a mentor to younger associates may be open to the individual and may provide a great source of satisfaction.

There is also an evaluation of family status during this period. For those with families, there is less control over children. When children leave home, there is the need to adjust lives that were centered on assisting in the development of the children. A large void may need to be filled. For those who either by choice or by lack of opportunity did not have children or remained unmarried, there is the realization that the opportunity is probably no longer there, and regrets and depression may result. There continues to be an evaluation of marriage. Mid-life changes can put a great deal of stress on a relationship, particularly if one of the partners has difficulty dealing with the changes and seeks to return to the lost opportunities of youth. During this period there is an increased concern over health matters. More

individuals find themselves on medication and develop chronic health problems. There is a greater possibility of having friends who die or of developing serious health problems.

While the early forties can be a time of upheaval, the mid to late forties can be a period of settling down. If the individual can come to a realistic evaluation of dreams and goals and can make decisions and modifications to career and lifestyle, there is the opportunity for increased self-acceptance and greater enjoyment of life. The individual may be more willing to settle, and may be less driven, more willing to relax. There may be less perceived pressure to achieve, less of a rush to reach major goals, but instead a desire to enjoy life. Leisure time becomes more important. There may be less family responsibilities and possibly more friends available. There is a reaching out for new friendships and for new ways to achieve satisfactions in life. This is an opportunity to develop new paths and new dreams, to adjust to them and to set a new life structure. By dealing positively with mid-life, an individual can find new ways for life to become more enjoyable and rewarding.

D. Age 50 to 60

This period is marked by a mellowing process, in which there is a softening of feelings and relationships, with more emphasis on everyday joys, minor achievements, and irritations. Some individuals attempt to deal with the aging process by returning to some of the things they feel symbolized the happiness of their youth. This denial of reality can often bring frustrating and unhappy results. Other individuals, having dealt with mid-life changes and having gone through the settling down period of the late forties, enter this period with few regrets. New experiences, friendships, and activities are tried with varying results. The individual is now definitely a member of the "older" generation and may have difficulty accepting this fact. Some approach advancing years with a sense of discouragement and withdrawal, while others see this as an opportunity for new freedoms, with fewer family responsibilities.

An individual's career may have well reached a plateau by this period, and the individual must learn to accept the possibility of being somewhat out of the mainstream, of marking time. There may continue to be challenges, but they may be of a more modest nature. Some deal with this by entering into second careers where the challenges of starting something new provide stimulation. A realistic evaluation of alternatives is necessary during this period. Not all opportunities are open and the individual must realize this. There is the danger of growing bitterness, of a victim mentality setting in, where other people, events, and circumstances are blamed for the individual's limited opportunities.

While there may be fewer family responsibilities, with children grown and independent, the new role of grandparent can be both a comfort and a problem. The individual is again reminded of advancing age and may rely too heavily on relationships with children and grandchildren for personal fulfillment. The new role with the spouse that developed in

the forties continues in this period, with more opportunities to do things together and to share activities and interests with friends. The wife may now have the need to assert herself more and to find more individual fulfillment through work and independent activities, where the husband may be more content to take a less active role in family affairs. This role reversal in the later years is common to many cultures. As the individual goes through this period of the fifties, there can be two distinct approaches. One is to view the period with resignation, withdrawal, and discouragement, and to face the aging process with a large amount of negativity and fear. The other approach is to see this period as an opportunity to try new things and make new friendships, unencumbered by some of the responsibilities and demands of earlier years.

E. Age 60 and Up

Most individuals are faced with retirement during this period and may not be ready for it. They may perceive this as being told they are no longer useful and may find themselves with large amounts of unstructured time. Others can approach this as another opportunity to try new things and to spend more time on activities that there was little time for in the past. Still others may see retirement as a golden opportunity, the reward for the many years of hard work, but may not be adequately prepared. Suddenly confronted with time that is totally unstructured, they may not know what to do with it. There may be a realization that retirement is not all that it is cracked up to be, if unrealistic expectations were made for retirement in the first place.

The physical deterioration of the aging process must be faced during this period and there will be the need at some time to adjust to the loss of one's spouse and close friends. Those who have supportive relationships to assist them through difficult times will be better able to deal with these losses. Discouragement and a sense of defeat can result from decreased physical capabilities, while this can be an opportunity to adjust physical activities to reflect the changes in physical condition. There may be a tendency to reflect back in life on lost opportunities and to engage in unproductive worries about the past and future. There is also the possibility of entering meaningful work in an area of interest where financial gain is not a primary goal. Whether it be volunteer or for pay, people who have the opportunity to continue working in some way often benefit immensely from it.

People who are prepared for this period can approach it as one of freedom, opportunity and pleasure. Appropriate financial, psychological, and physical preparations can help an individual to deal with the difficult times that may lie ahead. There is a danger of approaching this period with little preparation or with unrealistic expectations, and this can lead to disillusionment and discouragement. The realities of these years are often quite different from the expectations, but there are many opportunities for growth and enjoyment of life provided that an individual is prepared.

F. Summary

As you read the characteristics of the various life stages, you may see certain ones that apply to you. Life is complex and not everyone goes through certain stages at the same time. Also, what may be a particularly critical time for one person may be an easy time for another. We all go through various stages, but with greatly different degrees of intensity. Why look at these life stages? It is important to acknowledge that they do exist and that everyone is affected by them in some way. There may well be crises between stages, and these need to be met and dealt with. You need to be aware of the changes within you and how they affect you. Too often we look at the external changes as being the most significant points in our lives--graduation, marriage, having children, getting a job, etc. While these are important, there are other more subtle changes constantly taking place. Crises can produce growth, if they are dealt with appropriately. A problem can be turned into a new opportunity or it can be met with an attitude of defeat. It is important throughout life to accept challenges in order to promote self-growth.

G. Your Own Life Stages

Look back over the descriptions of the life stages. Where are you? List some of the problems or decisions you are now facing.

List some of the major crisis or decision points you have faced in the past ten years.

Were you satisfied with the way you handled the crisis or decision? Dissatisfied? Why?

For more information on adult life cycles, you may wish to read one or more of the following:

Levinson, Daniel J. The Seasons of a Man's Life. New York: Ballantine Books, 1978.

Loughary, John W. & Ripley, Theresa M. Career & Life Planning Guide. Chicago: Follett Publishing Co., 1976.

McCoy, Vivian; Ryan, Colleen; and Lichtenberg, James. The Adult Life Cycle. Lawrence, Kansas: The University of Kansas, 1978.

Sheehy, Gail. Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1974.

II. What Factors Are Affecting You?

If you are thinking of making a change in your career or lifestyle, it is important to evaluate those factors that may be causing you to consider change. Sometimes a change in just one part of your life can make a large impact on your total outlook on life. On the other hand, a change in one area, such as changing your job, may not get at the real issue which may be rooted in some other aspect of your life. In addition to being aware of your own life stages and how they can affect the way you see your life and the progress you are making, there are some specific factors that you should consider before making any major decisions. The following is a list of some of these factors.

A. Career

It is important to look at where you are in the evolution of your career. Have you reached a point in which some change is necessary to move ahead? How old are you? Where would you place your career status as it relates to the life stage that you are now in? Are you expecting too much from your career? Some people see their career as fulfilling most of their life values. This places a tremendous burden on the career and on career satisfaction. You should consider fulfilling activities outside of your career. If you are unhappy in your work, is it due to the nature of the work, the setting, or the people you work with? Sometimes a change in which you do the same work but with different people can make a big difference. Look at your work values. What is most important to you in your work? What is your ideal work day? No job is perfect. Would a change in your job or career bring about greater fulfillment of your work values? Look at your opportunities for change in a realistic way. What are the skills you can build on and the amount of retraining required for a career change? What are your financial and family responsibilities and how do they affect your options for change? It is important to look at all of your options; and after considering the possibilities open to you, even if you choose to stay in the same job, it will be a conscious decision based on an evaluation of your alternatives.

1. List the things that you like about your career.

2. List the things you don't like about your career.

3. Given your education, age, and other responsibilities, are your options for change limited? If so, in what ways?

4. What are the realistic options for career or job change that are open to you?

B. Family

An evaluation of your family situation is important. If you are married, how would you evaluate your relationship? What changes, if any, are necessary? It is important to remember that changes do take place in most marriages. One significant change is that women, as they reach their late thirties, tend to be more assertive, want to strike out on their own, and become more interested in establishing their own achievements. At the same time, men often become more emotional, family-centered, and less competitive as they enter their forties. This calls for considerable adjustment in some marriages. Men often become more family-oriented just as their children are becoming more independent. When your parents face physical problems with increasing age and eventually die, this can be a major source of stress. When children leave home, a significant adjustment in lifestyle is necessary.

If you are unmarried, it may be important to come to terms with possible feelings of isolation, the need to establish close personal relationships with friends, whether you wish to remain unmarried and what kind of control you have over your situation. If you value your family relationships and your job calls for you to be away from your family for large amounts of time, this may present a very difficult conflict that should be resolved. In addition, it may be worthwhile to evaluate the quality of time you spend with your family.

1. What are the sources of satisfaction in your family life?

2. What are your sources of frustration in your family life?

3. How would you change your family life if you could?

C. Values

What things are most important to you in your life at the present time? Is your career if primary importance? How about the time you spend with your family? Do you have outside leisure interests, community activities, or creative outlets? Do you spend time in volunteer work, have a second job, or go to school? There are always many factors in your life that compete for your time and attention. What you value most often determines how you will spend your time. When you decide to work late or go home to dinner, this is a value decision in which work takes the priority. When you decide to go to a movie rather than clean the house, this is another value decision. You are always making value decisions and an awareness of what values are most important to you can help you to live a more harmonious and less stressful life. When you know which values have a higher priority, you can more easily make the major and minor decisions that come up. Your values do change as you go through the various life stages. If you are currently seeking some change in your career or lifestyle, it may be due in part to the fact that some of your values may have changed. What was important to you in the past may be less important now. You may want to devote greater attention in your life to new things or to some of the things you did not have as much time for in the past.

1. What are some of the things in your life that are most important to you at the present time?

2. Try to take these and place them in order, with the most important first.

3. Have your values changed much over the past 5-10 years? Are things that were important then not as important now? Have other things taken on greater importance? In what ways have your values changed?

D. Physical Factors

Studies have shown that men are healthiest from ages 15-25 and women from ages 15-30. The more serious physical problems associated with aging, such as arthritis, rheumatism, heart ailments, and the like do not normally begin until around age 65 for women and 60 for men. However, there are physical changes that take place which can have an effect on your daily life. Vision peaks in the late teens, declines slightly in the twenties, remains stable through the mid-forties and then declines steadily. Hearing peaks around age 10, remains high through the forties and often declines rapidly after age 60. Taste, smell, and touch remain relatively stable, although there may be a slight decline in later life. Contrary to common belief, mental faculties do not generally deteriorate with age unless there is illness. While individuals from age 18-25 do best on IQ tests, the wisdom and experience that comes with increasing age makes up for speed in learning. Physical strength and stamina decreases with age, although physical activity can play a large role in slowing this process.

It is important for you to evaluate whether any physical changes you may be experiencing have any bearing on your desire to change. A very physically demanding job may become difficult to maintain. A high-paced job with long hours may cause you to have physical problems. You may have to adjust some of your leisure activities to reflect your changing physical capabilities. If so, it is important to replace these activities with something, and not to simply give them up. If you have been experiencing any physical problems, it is important to have them evaluated by qualified personnel, as they may be important in making any decision to change your lifestyle or career.

1. What physical changes have you experienced that may have an effect on your job or your leisure activities?

2. Do you have any physical problems that may be related to your work or lifestyle?

3. How would you resolve a conflict between what you want to do and what you are physically able to do?

E. Psychological Factors

Spend some time evaluating your own outlook on life. Are you bored with your job or lifestyle? This can often happen after you have worked for a number of years. Do you find yourself generally frustrated and feel that you are not worth as much as you once were? If your job seems to leave you dead-ended, this can have a negative effect on your self-confidence. If you previously devoted most of your efforts to your job, you may now need to branch out in different directions. If you are a woman and are bored with your family responsibilities and are looking for something else; this is perfectly natural. Men and women often progress through life at different rates, so their needs often do not parallel each other.

Do you feel like you have lost a good deal of time when you compare yourself with someone else your age? This is a common concern, as it is based on our societal values which tend to indicate that certain things are done at certain ages. Feeling that you are out of step with where you should be at your age can lead to a lack of self-worth and a sense of hopelessness. It is important to remember that you need to evaluate your own lifestyle and what you want to do. Comparisons with others, unless you derive support and inspiration from them, can be self-defeating. There is a distinct danger in approaching life changes with a negative, apprehensive, or defeatist outlook. If you can prepare yourself to approach these changes as an opportunity for growth, your happiness and sense of self-worth can increase.

1. What are some of the things that you often find yourself worrying about?

2. How would you describe your outlook on life? Positive? Negative? In what ways?

3. What things that concern you can you actually change or do something about?

4. What are the things that concern you over which you have no control?

F. Leisure

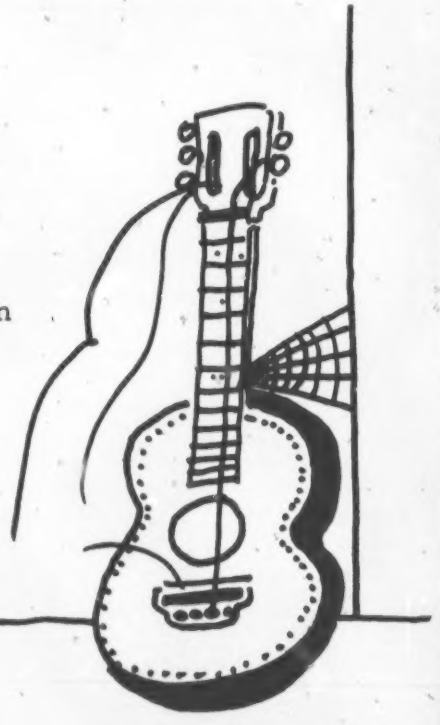
How do you spend your leisure time? Do you have much leisure time? Many of the hours you may consider to be available for leisure are actually taken up by household chores, eating, sleeping, personal care, and other programmed activity that you must do. Leisure time is that time which is available to you to do what you wish. You are free to schedule it or not schedule it, depending on your own preferences. If you are unhappy with your current lifestyle, take a minute or two and look at how you are spending your time. Do you have time available to pursue your own interests independent of your job and the demands of others? It may help to assume greater control of your non-work time and make sure that you block out time for yourself. In addition, evaluate the type of activity that you normally do in your leisure time. Sewing, for example, can be a good leisure time activity if you truly enjoy it and derive satisfaction from it. To others, sewing may simply be work and must be done out of necessity. If you enjoy working on your car and find it relaxing, it is a valuable leisure activity. However, if you feel you must do it to save on repair bills, it takes on quite a different meaning.

It is important for everyone to have some balance in their lives, and fulfilling leisure activities can be very valuable. This is especially true as you progress through the developmental life stages and begin to look for other areas of fulfillment besides work and family. Interests that you enjoy pursuing for their own sake can play a significant role in your ability to lead a satisfying life. These interests can take many forms, can be done alone or with people, can be active or passive, and can be expensive or of little or no cost. What is important is that you enjoy doing them for their own sake.

1. Write down 10 things that you like to do in your leisure time.

   1)
   2)
   3)
   4)
   5)
   6)
   7)
   8)
   9)
   10)

2. Next to each item, indicate approximately when you last did this activity.

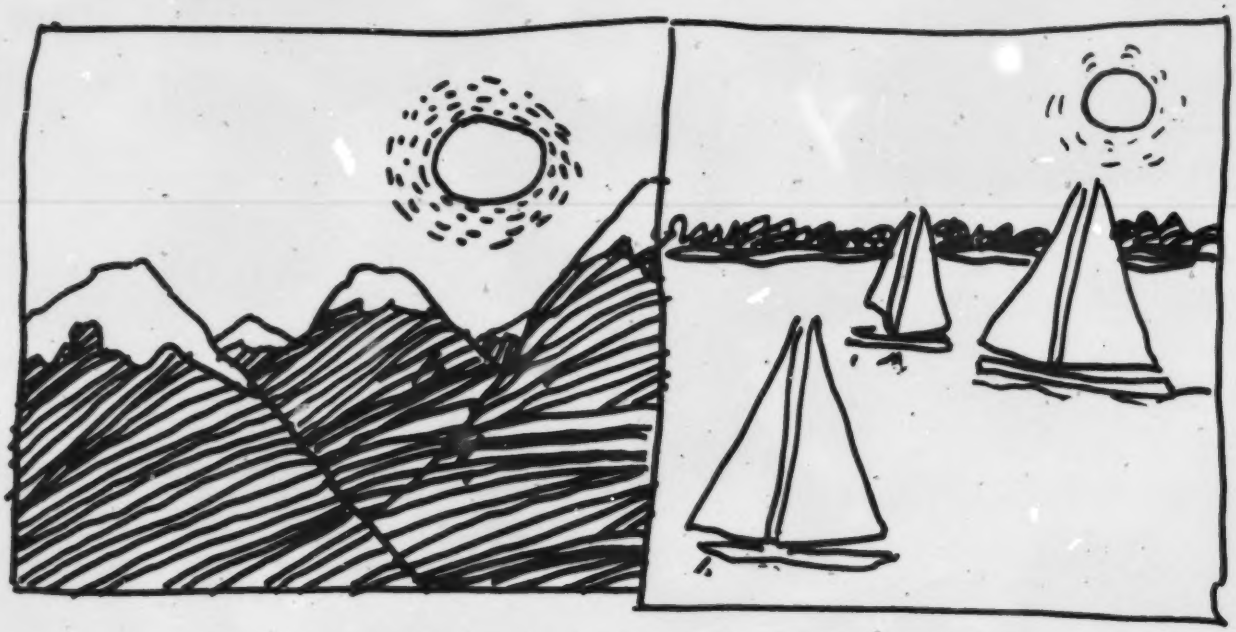


3. How might you change the way you spend your time so that you can more often do the things you like to do?

4. What are some other things that you would like to do in your leisure time?

G. Physical Environment

One possibility for change is the physical environment in which you work and live. Do you basically like the type of work you do but are unhappy with the people with whom you work, the place where you work, or the distance you travel to work? If so, you may wish to consider looking for a job where you would be doing the same type of work but in a different setting. Compared with other job changes, this would be an easier change to make because it would not involve obtaining new job skills. Another source of dissatisfaction can be the home or neighborhood in which you live. If your values conflict with those of your neighbors, if you feel isolated, or if the apartment or house in which you live is not appropriate to your needs, this can have a distinctly negative effect on your general life satisfaction. Consider your options for making a change.



The third source of dissatisfaction can be the geographical area in which you live. Evaluate your interests and the lifestyle you want to live. Would you be happier in a warmer climate, having greater access to cultural opportunities, in a more rural environment, in a small town, in a large city? If you have the option of moving, is this something you would like to consider? How about closeness to family and friends? How important is this? At times people tend to place too much emphasis on their residence or area they live as a source of dissatisfaction when there are really other problems that must be dealt with, but your physical environment can be a major factor in considering any change. A change in one aspect of your environment could possibly have very positive effects on your lifestyle satisfaction.

1. What do you like about the setting where you work, your home, and the geographical area where you live?

2. What don't you like about the setting where you work, your home, and the geographical area where you live?

3. What type of changes in these three aspects of your physical environment can you realistically consider?

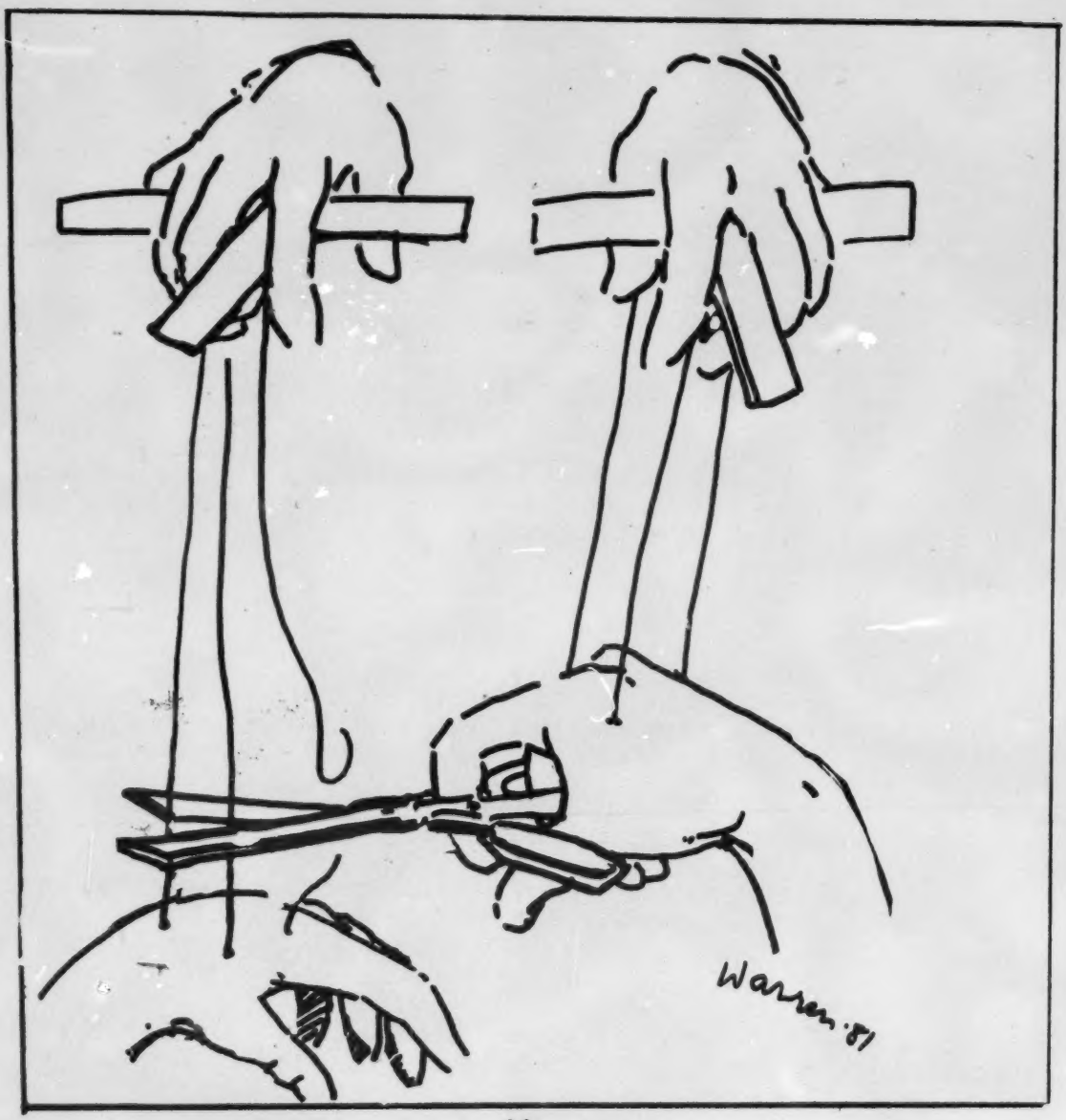
H. Influence of Others

What kind of influence do others have over how you will live your life or whether you will change your career? There are some very legitimate concerns when you consider the influence of others. Family financial responsibilities are a reality that must be dealt with, although too often these are used as an excuse to not even consider a major change. If you are unhappy with your career, talk it over with your spouse and family. Your happiness may be more important than stability, and they may be willing to make some sacrifices to help you achieve greater happiness. It is also important, if you are married, to make major decisions with your spouse. Friends and other family members can also provide excellent support, if their primary concern is your satisfaction and happiness.

Too often, however, the influence of others can be a negative factor in making a change. You may find yourself comparing where you are in your life and what you have with others your age. This can be a needless source of anxiety. You may be too willing to let friends tell you what they think would be best for you. Some help can be useful, but you must make the decisions. Members of your extended family may like to have you around, but your own life fulfillment may be increased by moving from the area. Some people may value stability and, even though they are well-meaning, may attempt to impose those values on you. It is important that you not allow direct influence or perceived influence to be imposed on you when it comes down to finally making a decision. Consider the advice of others who have your best interests at heart, but also consider their reference points. Then make your decision.

1. Who <u>has</u> influence over you, and in what ways?

2. Who <u>should</u> have influence over you, and in what ways?



I. Irrational Beliefs

You may have difficulty making a change for a number of reasons, including many that are self-defeating and irrational. Here is a list of eleven irrational beliefs as developed by Dr. Albert Ellis, a noted psychologist.[1] Try to consider these and avoid them when making any decision to change your lifestyle or career.

1. It is essential that one be loved or approved by virtually everyone in his community.

   -- This is an unattainable goal and to attempt to reach it can be self-defeating. You should be yourself, and define your own contributions and sources of satisfaction.

2. One must be perfectly competent, adequate, and achieving to consider oneself worthwhile.

   -- No one is perfect and to strive for this will bring about a constant fear of failure. Try to do well for your own sake and for your own enjoyment and fulfillment.

3. Some people are bad, wicked, or villainous and therefore should be blamed or punished.

   -- There is no absolute standard for right and wrong. Blaming oneself or others is not productive. Try to understand others' mistakes and help them not to make them again. Don't become overly taken up with your own mistakes. Try to learn from them.

4. It is a terrible catastrophe when things are not as one wants them to be.

   -- Frustrations are normal. Accept those situations you absolutely cannot change, but work on improving those situations where you can have an effect.

5. Unhappiness is caused by outside circumstances, and the individual has no control over it.

   -- Your reaction to outside events is what is important. Unhappiness comes largely from within, so try not to let yourself become annoyed or react negatively to events over which you have little control.

6. Dangerous or fearsome things are causes for great concern, and their possibility must be continually dwelt upon.

   -- If you worry about something happening and always think of the negative possibilities, you will be unable to make an objective decision and may not be able to deal effectively with the situation.

[1] Adapted from Ellis, Albert, and Harper, Robert A. A Guide to Rational Living. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1961.

7. It is easier to avoid certain difficulties and self-responsibilities than to face them.

   -- If you avoid something, it usually becomes more painful than facing it. Meeting difficulties and responsibilities can be a growing and satisfying experience.

8. One should be dependent on others and must have someone stronger on whom to rely.

   -- You are dependent on others to a certain degree, and you should seek help when you need it, but you must take responsibility for making your own decisions.

9. Past experiences and events are the determiners of present behavior; the influence of the past cannot be eradicated.

   -- You can learn from the past, but should not dwell on it. You can change past perceptions and deal with the present by acting appropriately on matters as they exist.

10. One should be quite upset over other people's problems and disturbances.

    -- You should consider whether you can help another person with a problem and, if so, do it; but you should not accept others' problems as your own when you have no control over them.

11. There is always a right or perfect solution to every problem, and it must be found or the results will be catastrophic.

    -- Perfect solutions do not exist, only those that are best among several alternatives. Evaluate your options and make the best decision for you, realizing that no decision is perfect.

III. What Are Your Options?

You have now looked at various aspects of your life and where changes might be made. Now you can begin to examine what options you have and the kind of changes, if any, that would be most appropriate for you. The following outline indicates some changes that you might want to consider. In the spaces provided, indicate which areas you might like to change. Don't feel that you have to know precisely how to change something. If you know what kind of change you want to make, write it down. However, if you know you want to change something but are not sure what to change it to or how to go about changing, just indicate that you want to change. That is sufficient for the moment.

A. Career

1. Do you want to change the type of work you do?

   If yes, what are some alternatives that are attractive to you?

2. Do you want to change the setting where you work?

   If yes, what are some alternatives?

3. Do you want to change the type of people you work with?

   If yes, what kind of people do you want to work with?

4. Do you want to put some new life into your current job?

   If yes, what are your options? (See Career Life Assessment Skills Series Booklet Seven, "Job Keeping and Revitalization.")

B. Family

1. Is there anything about your family relationships that you would like to change?

   If yes, what aspects would you consider changing?

2. Is there anything about your relationships with your friends that you would like to change?

   If yes, what changes would you like to make?

C. Values

1. Look at your top values that you listed in the preceding section, II-C. Does the time you spend in your daily and weekly activities reflect these values, or are there some parts of your life that are important but to which you do not give enough time?

2. How can you change your life to more clearly reflect your values?

D. Physical Factors

Look at the physical changes or problems that you listed in the preceding section, II-D. If there are any, what kind of action is necessary to deal with them?

1. Medical Assistance:

2. Change in Job:

3. Change in lifestyle or in leisure activities:

E. Psychological Factors

1. Look at the concerns that you often find yourself worrying about that you listed in section II-E. On which of these would you actually like to take some action?

2. What are some possible actions that you can take to deal with these concerns?

F. Leisure

1. List the things you like to do or would like to do in your leisure time.

2. Are there changes that you would like to make in order to spend more time doing these things?

   If yes, what kind of changes need to be made?

G. Physical Environment

Do you want to change your place of work, home, or the area in which you live?

If yes, what kind of changes do you want to make and when?

H. Influence of Others

Do you want to change the influence that other people have over you, either by becoming less dependent on some people or by gaining new sources of support from friends or family?

If yes, what kind of changes would you like to make?

I. Other Changes

Are there other changes not listed in the above categories that you would like to make in your lifestyle or career?

IV. Plan of Action

You have now looked at various aspects of your life and at some changes that you might want to consider making. Now look back at these changes and list below those on which you actually want to begin working.

A. Changes I want to make:

1. Which of these changes can be made soon, possibly with a relatively small amount of effort?

2. Which of these changes are most important to you and should receive priority as you develop a plan of action?

3. Now develop a plan of action. What changes do you plan to make

In the next week?

In the next month?

In the next year?

B. What kind of help do you need in making these changes?

1. Self-Evaluation

If, for example, you want to change your career but are unsure about alternatives, you might want to consider booklets One and Two of the Career Life Assessment Skills Series, which deal with "Your Unique Self" and "Job Market Investigation." You might also want to enroll for a career exploration course, or seek out individual counseling and testing. These are most probably available at the counseling service of your local community college.

2. Information

You will need information in order to make some decisions to change. At the end of this booklet is a bibliography of written resources that may be of assistance to you. The Career Resources Center in your local community college or library can be a good source of information on careers, educational opportunities, and leisure activities.

3. Support from Others

You should use family and friends as sources of support. Test out ideas and share your decision-making process with those whom your decision will affect. Obtain assistance from those whose opinions you value. Remember that you will have to make the final choice, but the involvement of others can be of great help.

4. Identify Realistic Options

Some changes may be very difficult to achieve in that they conflict with your responsibilities or involve major adjustments in your life and the lives of your family members. Try to evaluate which changes can be realistically achieved and work on these. If you

"The Rigors of Self Analysis"

can make some changes that at first seem minor, these may make quite a difference in your life so that you do not have to make a major change that would cause a great deal of upheaval for yourself and your family.

5. Decision-Making

   Follow a step by step process in making your decision. See the section on decision-making in Book et Two of the Career Life Assessment Skills Series. Remember that even if after considering a change you decide not to change, it is still a decision that you reached and you will be better off for having at least considered your alternatives.

6. Nothing Is Forever

   Have confidence in your ability to make decisions and to make changes. Do not become overly concerned about making the "right" change. Have confidence in your ability to make decisions and remember that change can bring about growth. Even though one change may not work out, you can simply change again, and by knowing yourself better and by knowing how to make decisions, you can gain greater control over your life.

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